

Telling Your Story Visually on Social Media

Credit: Climate Action Campaign



When you're crafting a message on social media, creating a narrative is important to its success.

Tara McMahon is the digital creative director at Climate Action Campaign, where she focuses on telling the story of climate change and finding innovative ways to convey the detailed science of climate change.

"Given the nature of platforms like Facebook and Twitter," said McMahon, "images and graphics offer an important opportunity to engage the reader in your story."

We asked McMahon to offer the YALI Network her tips for incorporating compelling visuals into online campaigns.

1. Create a mini-campaign "brand" for a set of visuals.

Using consistent fonts, colors and design elements helps drive the overarching message visually.

2. Pick the best approach for telling your story.

Info graphics are helpful for distilling finds in reports, photos are best for highlighting real-life impacts, and quotes and graphics are good for elevating direct stories.

3. Use your resources!

The Internet is full of free and low-cost resources: templates for infographics, free fonts, color palette generators, Creative Commons photos and more.

4. Think of visuals as a companion to your messaging.

For example, visuals can help tell a story about real-world local impacts of a global problem like climate change. It's important to start with a strong message you're looking to convey. Then visuals help give more context so you can craft a story that will really resonate with the viewer.

5. Be creative!

Trying new things is the best way to determine what works with your audience. Test out using two different types of visuals that convey the same story and see which one engages people the most.

Stories with Purpose: Inspiring Action and Change

Stories with purpose don't just materialize — they're strategically planned, creatively crafted and designed to achieve measurable outcomes.

From the oral traditions of the past to the digital techniques of the present, stories have always been a crucial part of human communication. However, with the advent of the Internet and digital media, the face of storytelling has changed. So, how can we combine age-old traditions with emerging technologies to ensure that your stories have maximum motivating power and impact?

That's where [Hatch for Good](#) comes in. The site is a great place to start if you are seeking to leverage the power of storytelling — something that nonprofits often find exciting but also daunting. [Hattaway Communications](#), with support from the Rockefeller Foundation, developed this platform specifically for storytelling in the digital age, so that people and organizations that have big ideas can connect to the tools and strategies they need — to create high-impact stories that inspire others to take action.


After launching Hatch for Good in late 2014, members of the Hattaway team traveled across the globe to Kenya, India and Thailand to help social impact organizations become storytelling organizations. I was fortunate enough to be a part of that team and witnessed firsthand the most immediate storytelling needs of nonprofits. Every region has its set of unique challenges, but there were three crosscutting areas of interest.

1. Building Strategy and Capacity. Often, social impact organizations dive into storytelling without articulating clear goals, understanding the interests and motivations of key audiences, or setting measurable objectives.

Our [Strategy Toolkit](#) is carefully designed to help build your "Narrative Framework," the overarching story that helps provide structure and consistency for all individual stories your organization will tell.

To complement your strategy, the [Capacity Toolkit](#) is designed to help you understand the resources and skills you need to become a storytelling organization. 

2. Creating Stories that Capture Attention and Imagination. In today's competitive media environment, only the most compelling content gets noticed and shared. Storytelling is both an art and a science — and stories for social impact must show people as active agents of change, who play a central role in creating solutions to the problems they face.

In the [Content Toolkit](#), we'll help you sketch your story based on the Social Impact Story Map adapted from a tried-and-true formula seen in narratives from Homer to Hollywood. 

3. Engaging Communities and Measuring Impact. With an inordinate number of digital tools

available, social impact organizations struggle to understand which to use to most effectively engage their audiences. There's no one-size-fits-all solution. The [Platform Toolkit](#) aims to provide customized tips based on your audiences and technology. While I was in Nairobi, most organizations found our guides on [Facebook](#), [Twitter](#) and [LinkedIn](#) to be very practical and useful for promoting their stories. [These guides](#) contain best practices for making the most of popular social networks — whether you're a social media expert or a beginner.

To understand what's working in your stories, you can evaluate the impact of your storytelling on an ongoing basis — so you can learn what's working and adjust your strategy accordingly. Our [Evaluation Toolkit](#) and [guides](#) explain how best to measure the impact of your storytelling efforts.

We hope this is a helpful introduction to how you can harness the power of storytelling to communicate stories of impact, using a sound strategy, compelling content and the right digital tools — and inspire people to take action to create change worldwide.

[Using Blogging to Tell Your Organization's Story](#)

The [YALI Network blog](#) is a platform that enables us to share powerful stories of YALI Network members and to provide expert advice on subjects YALI Network members care about. You, too, can use blogging to share your stories and engage your audience.

Blogs are excellent Web-based platforms to host and maintain records of creative content and stories. Your blogging platform can host text, images and embedded videos, and provide a landing page that can be linked to various sources of traditional and social media channels/platforms.

There are multiple platforms available for blogging, including [WordPress](#), [Joomla](#), [Django](#) and [Drupal](#), among others. These platforms are versatile and allow you to create blogs that can expand reach and resources by connecting with audiences emotionally.

The most effective way to share stories on your blog is to plan ahead and create a detailed editorial calendar for producing original content. Most blogging platforms have built-in capabilities to schedule and publish posts according to your organization's editorial calendar.

You can increase the visibility of your blog by being active and consistent, by sharing your blog posts through social media and email, by inviting experts in your field to contribute as guest bloggers, and by talking about stories that tie into current events.

This article is adapted from Hatch for Good's [Guide to Blogging and CMS](#). Hatch for Good is a platform that provides people and organizations with the tools they need to create powerful stories and inspire positive action in the digital age. Visit [Hatch for Good's website](#) to view additional

resources.

Using Twitter to Tell Your Organization's Story

Every month, thousands of YALI Network members engage policymakers, experts and entrepreneurs during exclusive #YALICHats on [Twitter](#). But that isn't all that Twitter can do for you.

Twitter is an online social networking and microblogging tool to send and read short, 140-character text messages, called "tweets." Users access Twitter through its website interface, desktop application, SMS or mobile device application.

Twitter is often used for instantly spreading news and information. It can be compared to a news channel — you can discover news as it's happening, learn more about topics that are important to you and get the inside scoop in real time.

If you have something quick to say and have the capacity to say it often, Twitter could be your platform of choice. Twitter is also heavily used for live tweeting and live events.

The most effective way to share stories on Twitter is to plan ahead by building an editorial calendar and scheduling your tweets in advance with applications like [Hootsuite](#), [TweetDeck](#) or [Buffer](#). Plan to post at least three tweets per day. Short and simple text and photos work best.

You can maximize your visibility on Twitter by starting discussions with influential people, posing questions, following others and using relevant hashtags in your tweets.

This article is adapted from Hatch for Good's [Guide to Twitter](#). Hatch for Good is a platform that provides people and organizations with the tools they need to create powerful stories and inspire positive action in the digital age. Visit [Hatch for Good's website](#) to view additional resources.

Using LinkedIn to Tell Your Organization's Story

Did you know that nearly 5,000 YALI Network members use the [YALI Network LinkedIn Group](#) to connect with one another and to grow their professional networks?

LinkedIn is a business-oriented social network that helps its users make professional connections, find jobs, discover leads and more. Users create their own professional profiles — similar to a digital resume — and establish connections with colleagues, potential partners and businesses.

If you are looking to share stories with an educated, affluent and professional audience, consider using LinkedIn. Its ability to engage a highly targeted, donor-rich demographic makes it a powerful distribution channel for social impact organizations.

The best way to share stories on LinkedIn is through status updates on your organization's Company Page. When sharing content on LinkedIn, be sure to post links and use images. Posts with links to other content have twice the engagement rate of posts without, and posts with images have a 98 percent higher comment rate.

Organizations should engage with their LinkedIn followers on a regular basis by encouraging them to participate in the conversations spurred by the stories you share in your status updates. You can further this participation by asking follow-up questions and writing status updates with clear calls to action.

To increase your organization's visibility on LinkedIn, you should create original content, encourage others to share your content, and give people a clear reason to engage with your content.

This article is adapted from Hatch for Good's [Guide to LinkedIn](#). Hatch for Good is a platform that provides people and organizations with the tools they need to create powerful stories and inspire positive action in the digital age. Visit [Hatch for Good's website](#) to view additional resources.
